

## Message Text

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ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 ISO-00 AID-20 OMB-01 INRE-00 SSO-00

NSCE-00 USIE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10

L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-03 SS-20

IO-14 DPW-01 DRC-01 /136 W  
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FM AMEMBASSY PARIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8714

INFO AMEMBASSY SAIGON IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L PARIS 10352

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT/VS

SUBJECT: ACTIVITIES OF SOUTH VIETNAMESE BUDDHIST, THICH  
NHAT HANH

REF: (A) STATE 84428; (B) SAIGON 5461; (C) STATE 86008

1. ACCORDING TO SOUTH VIETNAMESE SOURCES HERE, THICH NHAT HANH LEFT SOUTH VIETNAM IN 1966 FOR THE US. HE HAS BEEN RESIDING IN FRANCE FOR THE PAST TWO YEARS; THE FRENCH GOVERNMENT HAS REFUSED TO GIVE HIM AN EXIT VISA BECAUSE HE HAD FORGED ENTRIES IN HIS TRAVEL DOCUMENTATION. ACCORDING TO OUR SOURCES, NHAT HANH HAS BEEN VERY QUIET IN PARIS AND HAS HAD VERY LITTLE CONTACT WITH OTHER BUDDHIST OR ANTI-GVN ORGANIZATIONS. ONE REASON IS THAT HE IS ON BAD PERSONAL TERMS WITH THICH THIEN CHAU, THE HEAD OF THE LEFTIST "OVERSEAS BUDDHIST ASSOCIATION", THE OSTENSIBLE "THIRD FORCE" BUDDHIST GROUP WHOSE ACTIONS ARE ORCHESTRATED BY THE COMMUNISTS. GVN SOURCES SAY THAT PRIOR TO SIGNATURE OF THE PARIS AGREEMENT NHAT HANH'S PRINCIPAL PROPAGANDA LINE WAS ANTI-AMERICANISM, PARTICULARLY OPPOSITION TO THE PRESENCE OF US FORCES IN SVN. WITH THE WITHDRAWAL OF US  
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FORCES, THE ISSUE WITH WHICH HE WAS MOST CLOSELY IDENTI-

FIED VANISHED. HE HAS ATTEMPTED TO REPLACE IT BY A GENERAL APPEAL TO "HUMANITARIANISM".

2. NHAT HANH'S ORGANIZATIONS APPARENTLY EXIST PRIMARILY ON PAPER. WE ARE ASSURED THAT NHAT HANH HAS NO FOLLOWING IN LOCAL SVN COMMUNITY APART FROM A HANDFUL OF CLOSE ASSOCIATES, OF WHOM THE PRINCIPAL FIGURE IS A WOMAN, CAO NGOC PHUONG, A FORMER TEACHER AT THE UNIVERSITY OF HUE. MISS PHUONG'S PAST STATEMENTS HAVE BEEN PHRASED IN CONVENTIONAL COMMUNIST DIALECTIC, ACCORDING TO RELIABLE WITNESSES.

3. ACCORDING TO ONE SOURCE, NHAT HANH REMAINS IN CONTACT WITH THE VIEN HOA DAO. ACCORDING TO ANOTHER SOURCE HE RECENTLY SEVERED HIS FORMER CONNECTIONS WITH THE AN QUANG GROUP, WHICH REPORTEDLY AGITATED WITH THE GVN TWO YEARS AGO IN FAVOR OF HIS RETURN TO SVN. (NHAT HANH ACTUALLY REACHED BANGKOK BUT WAS DETERRED FROM PROCEEDING ON TO SAIGON.)

4. ACCORDING TO OUR SOURCES, NHAT HANH WILL SURFACE NEXT AT THE SECOND WORLD CONGRESS ON RELIGION AND PEACE TO BE HELD IN LOUVAIN IN AUGUST 1974. NHAT HANH IS LISTED AS ONE OF THE MEMBERS OF THE PREPARATORY COMMITTEE FOR THIS CONGRESS, WHICH IS EXPECTED TO TRY TO SEND A DELEGATION TO SVN TO LOOK INTO THE ISSUE OF "POLITICAL PRISONERS".

5. SOUTH VIETNAMESE SOURCES HERE STRONGLY BELIEVE THAT THE PRINCIPAL FOREIGN SOURCE OF NHAT HANH'S FUNDS IS US ANTI-WAR ORGANIZATIONS, CHIEFLY RELIGIOUS DENOMINATIONS. NHAT HANH CONDUCTS EXTENSIVE FUND-RAISING ACTIVITIES HERE, OSTENSIBLY FOR WIDOWS' AND ORPHANS' RELIEF.

6. WE HAVE NO HARD INFORMATION ON THE SOURCE OF NHAT HANH'S INFORMATION, BUT OUR SOURCES SPECULATE THAT IT COMES FROM HIS CORRESPONDENTS IN SVN.  
IRWIN

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